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Chair: Mr. Fathalla

Contents

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 40 of the Covenant

Initial report of Bahrain

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Mr. Fathalla (Vice-Chair) took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 40 of the Covenant

Initial report of Bahrain (CCPR/C/BHR/1; CCPR/C/BHR/Q/1 and CCPR/C/BHR/Q/1/Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Bahrain took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Mr. Aldoseri** (Bahrain), introducing his country's initial report (CCPR/C/BHR/1), said that the people of Bahrain had harnessed their considerable economic, social and political expertise to create a modern society. In addition to the reform programme contained in the National Action Charter, the Government had implemented its 2015-2018 action programme entitled "Towards a just, safe and prosperous society" in order to institute a democratic political system, promote foreign relations, improve defence capabilities, combat terrorism and extremism, prevent hate speech and promote an environment conducive to the constructive participation of civil society and trade unions. The programme had achieved encouraging results, particularly in relation to education and the media, and had served to institute a climate of open dialogue and transparency.

3. On the basis of the recommendations made by the Independent Commission of Inquiry, which had been set up to investigate the events that had taken place in Bahrain in February and March 2011, criminal provisions had been reviewed to ensure that they were compatible with international standards. The Civil Settlement Initiative had been established to compensate the victims of those events, without prejudice either to the right of victims to settle amicably or to the criminal liability of perpetrators. Compensation totalling 3,120,000 dinars had been awarded in 52 cases, while 17 cases had been settled amicably. An article had been added to the Criminal Code to reaffirm the right to freedom of expression.

4. The National Consensus Dialogue had been convened to devise means of strengthening national unity and had led to Parliament being granted new legislative and oversight powers and to the review of electoral constituencies. Civil society organizations had been granted the right to observe elections. The National Consensus Dialogue had led to a large number of amendments to the Constitution and had been hailed as a model for enacting political and social change in the interests of a country and its people.

5. Also in accordance with the recommendations of the Independent Commission of Inquiry, the Special Investigation Unit had been established within the Public Prosecution Office and operated in line with the Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Istanbul Protocol). It carried out investigations into wrongdoings that had led to torture, death or injury committed by public officials, including by persons in high-ranking positions.

6. Bahraini women had achieved significantly higher levels of participation in the labour force as well as in economic, cultural and social activities in the previous 18 years. Women held 9 of the 40 seats on the Shura Council and were represented in Parliament. They were also very active in the health sector, where they had accounted for 65 per cent of the workforce in 2017. Women were increasingly taking part in commercial and trade activity and running businesses.

7. Bahrain was recognized as a top destination for expatriates and their families, with most reporting high levels of satisfaction and feeling welcome in society. The Director-General of the International Organization for Migration had welcomed the efforts made by Bahrain to protect the rights of migrant workers. Bahrain had been categorized as a Tier 1 country in the June 2018 Trafficking in Persons Report by the United States Department of State.

8. Bahrain had acceded to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 2006, and the Covenant could be invoked directly before the courts. The Family Code No.

19 of 2017 provided many benefits to families and Bahraini women and served as a reflection of national unity and a rejection of all attempts to fuel sectarian divisions.

9. **Mr. de Frouville** said that the initial report of Bahrain was appreciated by the Committee and represented an important milestone. However, the 10-year delay in its submission was regrettable and he hoped that the State party would be able to submit future periodic reports on time. Moreover, while the report claimed that the values of tolerance and non-discrimination underpinned Bahraini society, the country's recent history, particularly the 2011 uprisings and their repression, called those claims into question. The Shiite community largely felt discriminated against by the Sunni authorities, and numerous reports from credible non-governmental sources indicated an increased use of repression against any form of opposition to the State. In addition, the revival of capital punishment, the reinstitution of the practice of judging civilians in military courts and the exponential rise in revocations of nationality and convictions against human rights defenders and trade unionists were points that the Committee would want to discuss.

10. He would welcome further information about the legal value of the Covenant in Bahrain; specifically, whether it took priority over domestic laws or merely administrative acts, how discrepancies between the Covenant and other laws were resolved and what mechanisms were in place for victims to invoke the Covenant before the courts. He wondered whether there had been any cases in which a court had recognized the supremacy of the Covenant or an individual had successfully invoked it.

11. The State party had not indicated whether it planned to withdraw its reservations to the Covenant. Its reservation to articles 3, 18 and 23 was too general and therefore incompatible with the object and purpose of the Covenant; the State party should clarify the scope of that reservation. Similarly, the scope of its reservation to article 9 (5) should be made explicit. He wished to renew the call for the State party to indicate whether it intended to ratify the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

12. It was not clear how the State party had included civil society in the preparation of its report and how it planned to disseminate and implement the Committee's recommendations. He would be interested to learn whether the State party planned to establish a national mechanism for reporting and follow-up and to contact the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to receive technical assistance to that end.

13. With respect to the Family Code approved in July 2017, he would like to know the rationale behind the Ministry of Justice decision of August 2017 to require women under the age of 45 to be accompanied by a male guardian to take part in the Hajj. It remained unclear whether the Family Code enabled Sunni and Shiite cases alike to be judged by a unified court. Finally, he wished to know why the State party did not allow decisions issued by sharia courts in divorce cases to be appealed in the Court of Cassation.

14. **Mr. Heyns** said that the high level of independence of the Commission of Inquiry was welcome and its recommendations represented a very positive development. However, it was unclear whether all of the Commission's recommendations had been implemented, as conflicting reports had been received. He would appreciate clarification on that point, particularly because it seemed that there had been a reversal of some of the changes instituted in response to the recommendations. For example, it appeared that the main intelligence service had reacquired law enforcement powers, and that military courts were once again being used to try civilians.

15. With respect to sexual orientation and gender identity, he wished to know whether individuals of the same sex could be criminally prosecuted for engaging in public displays of affection, or whether only public conduct of a sexual nature was punishable by law.

16. A moratorium on the death penalty had been lifted in 2017. According to article 6 of the Covenant, in countries where it had not been abolished, the death penalty could be imposed only for the most serious crimes. However, it was his understanding that persons could be sentenced to death in the State party for committing crimes that were not traditionally considered to be of the most serious nature. Furthermore, there had been

allegations that the fairness of some trials in which the death penalty had been handed down had been deeply compromised. He was interested to know whether the State party planned to limit the imposition of the death penalty to the most serious crimes, if it were not to be abolished. In addition, he wished to know how many people were on death row in the State party. Moreover, he had been made aware that the death penalty had been used to quash political dissent, and that the State sought to hand down the death penalty to the leader of the main opposition political party. He would be grateful for the delegation's comment on that matter.

17. The State party had provided extensive information on the use of force in custodial settings. However, it would be interesting to know more about the use of force in non-custodial settings, such as demonstrations. In particular, he asked when law enforcement officials were permitted to use force on protesters and what constraints were imposed upon them. In that regard, it would be useful to be provided with a copy of Decree No. 24 of 2014 on the basic principles on the use of force and firearms, mentioned in paragraph 16 (c) of the State party's replies to the list of issues (CCPR/C/BHR/Q/1/Add.1). It would also be useful to know how many persons had been killed during demonstrations in the State party. The delegation should clarify the State party's position on the right of persons injured during demonstrations to receive medical treatment for their injuries.

18. **Mr. Muhumuza** said that he was pleased to learn that steps had been taken to tackle discrimination against persons with disabilities and other persons belonging to minorities, but he wished to know what judicial and administrative remedies were available to the victims of discriminatory acts. Moreover, he would appreciate information on all cases involving matters of discrimination brought before the courts, whether completed or under way. It would also be interesting to know what the most prevalent form of discrimination was and what the State party was doing to tackle it. The delegation should confirm whether the National Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities had expired in 2016. If that were the case, he would be interested to know what the Strategy's tangible outcome had been, how that outcome would inform the State party's efforts to guarantee the rights of persons with disabilities in the future, and whether a successor strategy had been put in place.

19. The State party's definition of terrorism set out in Act No. 58 of 2006 lent itself to such a broad interpretation that it could be used as the basis for violations of the rights of freedom of expression, association and assembly. Furthermore, the national counter-terrorism framework allowed military courts to try civilians. He was therefore interested to know how the definition of terrorism was applied in practice and why counter-terrorism legislation had been used as the basis for the arrest of human rights and political activists. In addition, he wished to know how many persons had been detained under Act No. 58 of 2006, regardless of whether their detention had resulted in a trial.

20. The Committee was concerned about reports of the arbitrary arrest and detention of opposition politicians and human rights activists in the State party. It would be useful to know whether the State party had taken any measures to ensure that procedural safeguards were respected during arrests and that the practical operations of the security forces conformed to the law. It would be interesting to learn how the State party measured improvements in the conduct of law enforcement officers during arrests and to receive any information collated for that purpose. He also wished to know how many complaints of unlawful arrest or arbitrary detention the State party received annually and how those complaints were addressed. He would appreciate more information on how the manual on procedures for arrest and pretrial detention and the Police Code of Conduct, as described in paragraph 135 of the State party's report, were implemented. Lastly, the delegation should bring the Committee up to date on the State party's plans to establish an independent mechanism for investigating allegations of police misconduct.

21. **Ms. Abdo Rocholl** said that she would appreciate an answer from the delegation to the question as to whether the State party planned to abolish the practice of polygamy. She asked what the minimum age for marriage was in the State party and whether there were plans to introduce a complete ban. She would be interested to know whether it was possible to obtain a divorce simply because one of the parties to a marriage no longer wished to be married. The delegation should indicate whether the State party had contemplated

introducing objective criteria to determine the most suitable custodian of a child based exclusively on his or her welfare, rather than on the age of the child or the will of the parties to the custodial arrangement. In addition, it was her understanding that Bahraini legislation denied women the right to pass on their nationality to their children or spouses. She wished to know whether the State party planned to change the law in that regard.

22. She would appreciate information on women's right to inherit property and on the types of employment that were inaccessible to women. Furthermore, it would be useful to know what proportion of public decision-making positions were occupied by women and to receive further information on the implementation of the National Plan for the Advancement of Bahraini Women 2013–2022 and its outcomes.

23. The delegation should inform the Committee of the current status of the bill providing for the derogation of article 353 of the Criminal Code concerning domestic and sexual violence against women. It would also be interesting to know whether the State party had taken any legislative steps to make marital rape a criminal offence. In addition, she would appreciate clarification as to whether law enforcement officers, public prosecutors and judges received training in how to address domestic violence. Lastly the delegation should provide information on the outcomes of the National Strategy on the Protection of Women against Domestic Violence.

The meeting was suspended at 4.10 p.m. and resumed at 4.30 p.m.

24. **Mr. Aldoseri** (Bahrain) said that his Government had adopted many measures to raise awareness of human rights in the country. Training and awareness-raising sessions had been organized in many ministries, citizenship and human rights courses had been taught in schools since the 2005/06 academic year and courses on human rights were taught in the University of Bahrain, some of which were compulsory for all students. Law students were provided with training in human rights, all students enrolled in the Royal Police Academy took compulsory courses in human rights, and the Academy hosted training sessions organized by various international organizations, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross.

25. Bahraini legislation promoted public participation in strengthening the human rights framework as it related to all groups, including children, the elderly and persons with disabilities, and in fields such as human trafficking, violence and family rights. In order to address family and women's issues, a Family Code had been promulgated in 2017, regulating family relations. The Supreme Council for Women had done much to address family issues, including by organizing training sessions, which were open to the public, on the integration and inclusion of women in society and on gender equality. The Supreme Council for Women had also made tremendous progress in empowering women and involving them in the sustainable development process. The launching of the Princess Sabeeka bint Ibrahim Al-Khalifa Global Award for Women's Empowerment had been announced at the sixty-second session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.

26. Progress had also been made in the institutional and academic spheres. The Judicial and Legal Studies Institute, affiliated to the Supreme Judicial Council, had organized a number of training programmes for judges, public prosecutors and lawyers regarding international agreements and standards in areas such as human trafficking and domestic violence. The National Institution for Human Rights had organized conferences on civil and political rights, and the Bahrain Institute for Political Development had provided training and conducted research to support parliamentary and municipal elections, to promote the rule of law and to support organizations that promoted human rights.

27. Action had been taken to promote sustainable development and to protect and promote human rights despite existing challenges to the Kingdom's security. Acts of violence and terrorism had been addressed without undermining human rights and freedoms. A culture of human rights and democracy was being spread, in cooperation with educational and cultural institutions and civil society organizations. The rule of law and the impartiality and independence of the judiciary were core principles of governance, and the right to a fair trial in line with international norms was enshrined in the Kingdom's

Constitution and legislation. The legislature had established human rights committees in both the Chamber of Deputies and the Shura Council.

28. Measures had been taken to promote equality, tolerance and peaceful coexistence and to eliminate violence and incitement to hatred. The King Hamad Global Centre for Peaceful Coexistence promoted inter-faith dialogue and the sharing of values between civilizations and cultures and opposed extremism conducive to violence, hatred and terrorism. The Arab Court of Human Rights had been established in response to a proposal by the King of Bahrain. The Kingdom was also involved in developing an Arab human rights strategy and cooperated with the Arab Commission for Human Rights in monitoring the implementation of the Arab Charter on Human Rights. Bahrain was currently preparing a national human rights plan in cooperation with competent national and international bodies.

29. Bahrain had hosted the forty-second session of the World Heritage Committee of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Manama from 24 June to 4 July 2018, and two Bahraini sites had been included in the World Heritage List.

30. It was unacceptable to refer to the rights of minority or majority Sunni or Shia population groups, since the Kingdom was composed of a single united population and it rejected and prosecuted all forms of discrimination on sectarian grounds.

31. **Mr. Majbel** (Bahrain) said that every effort was made to ensure that national legislation reflected international human rights norms and the judiciary ensured that it was applied without any form of discrimination. Act No. 56 of 2006, whereby Bahrain had acceded to the Covenant, had been published in the Official Gazette and had therefore acquired the force of law and could be invoked before the courts, in accordance with article 37 of the Constitution. Article 105 (b) of the Constitution had been amended with a view to promoting security and stability. Act No. 12 of 2017, which amended the Military Courts Act, clearly defined terrorist acts, which were being perpetrated with greater frequency in recent times. The amendments ensured that military tribunals were independent and guaranteed a fair trial, and that accused persons had the right to appeal, in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure. They reflected relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions and international and regional treaties.

32. Imposition of the death penalty called for a consensus among the judges in the court concerned, and provision had been made for multiple safeguards and guarantees of due process. The death penalty was imposed only for the most serious national security crimes or premeditated homicide, in line with article 6 of Covenant. The death penalty was prescribed by Act No. 58 of 2006 on the Protection of Society from Acts of Terrorism and Act No. 15 of 2007 on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances because such crimes represented a grave danger to society. The sentence could, however, be commuted by consensus. Bahrain also complied with the provisions of Economic and Social Council resolution 1984/50 concerning safeguards guaranteeing protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty.

33. With regard to deprivation of citizenship, a detailed response was contained in paragraphs 128 to 132 of the State party's replies to the list of issues.

34. With regard to reservations to the Covenant, Bahrain complied with articles 3, 18 and 23 provided they were consistent with article 2 of the Constitution, which stipulated that Islam was the State religion and that the Islamic sharia was the principal source of legislation, and with article 5 (b), which stipulated that the State guaranteed reconciliation of women's duties towards the family with their work in society and guaranteed their equality with men in the political, social, cultural and economic fields, provided the provisions of the Islamic sharia were not breached.

35. Freedom of belief and worship for all religions and denominations was guaranteed in Bahrain by the National Action Charter and the Constitution. Article 22 of the Constitution stipulated that freedom of conscience was absolute and that the State guaranteed the freedom to perform religious rites and hold religious parades and meetings, in accordance with the country's customs.

36. **Mr. Aldoseri** (Bahrain) said that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs convened regular meetings with civil society organizations and stakeholders in order to involve them in the preparation of reports for submission to the treaty bodies and the Universal Periodic Review Working Group. The High Coordinating Committee for Human Rights, which was chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, was composed of representatives of public institutions and met every two months to monitor compliance with the Kingdom's international obligations, to respond to requests and to prepare reports.

37. **Mr. Alansari** (Bahrain) said that the Private Sector Labour Code (Act No. 36 of 2012) and the Civil Service Act promulgated by Decree-Law No. 48 of 2010 guaranteed equal treatment for workers of both genders.

38. The Trade Unions Act promulgated by Decree-Law No. 33 of 2002, as amended, guaranteed freedom of association. Bahrain was a pioneering country in the region in terms of social security and unemployment benefits. Decree-Law No. 78 of 2006 guaranteed unemployed Bahraini and foreign workers 60 per cent of their wages for a period of six months. Workers who were subjected to ill-treatment could file individual and group complaints, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Development guaranteed the right to litigation free of charge at all levels. There were also telephone hotlines in different languages, and awareness-raising documents had been published in 14 languages in order to acquaint migrant workers with their rights and duties. A system of flexible permits for migrant workers had been launched in 2017 to prevent exploitation by employers, to enable workers to seek alternative employment and to provide them with legal protection. Vigorous action was also being taken to combat trafficking in persons.

39. Decree-Law No. 21 of 1989 facilitated the establishment of cultural, youth, sports and other associations. For instance, administrative bodies were required to register associations of at least 10 members within 60 days of the submission of an application. Complaints could be filed if they failed to do so.

40. The Ministry of Labour and Social Development provided social and financial support to needy families pursuant to Act No. 18 of 2006 concerning social security, and it assisted family members in finding employment. Temporary shelters were provided for victims of family violence, including minors, and assistance was provided to beggars and homeless persons.

41. Article 20 of Act No. 74 of 2006 prescribed penalties for discrimination against persons with disabilities. For instance, employers were required to pay fines as well as all due arrears. Under Act No. 14 of 2017, the National Committee for Persons with Disabilities was tasked with developing a new National Strategy for Persons with Disabilities. The final draft was currently being discussed. More persons with disabilities were entering the labour market, and a highly specialized and well-equipped centre comprising nine buildings would be opened in 2019.

42. The list of jobs from which women were excluded was very short and sought to protect them, especially pregnant women, from risks stemming, for example, from the country's very hot climate and other health risks. Women currently made up 53 per cent of employees in the public sector and 34 per cent in the private sector. Both ratios were extremely high for the region.

43. **Mr. Aldoseri** (Bahrain) said that family courts were located in a single building. However, cases based on Jaafari Shia jurisprudence were addressed separately from those based on Sunni jurisprudence.

44. **Mr. Almoyed** (Bahrain) said that citizens were equal in terms of rights and obligations under the Constitution and domestic legislation. Women enjoyed the right to equal wages, in accordance with international instruments. The National Plan for the Advancement of Bahraini Women 2013–2022 aimed at building women's capacity to contribute to economic development, based on the principle of equality of opportunity, and to improve their quality of life.

45. Women acquired Bahraini citizenship on the same terms as men. If a Bahraini woman married a foreigner, she could retain her citizenship. If she had opted for her husband's nationality, she could recover Bahraini citizenship in the event of a divorce. A

draft amendment to the Bahraini Nationality Act would allow Bahraini women married to foreigners to grant Bahraini citizenship to their children in certain circumstances.

46. The King of Bahrain had endorsed Family Code No. 19 of 2017, which replaced that of 2009 and included provisions aimed at standardizing the legal status of Bahraini families. The Code protected the interests of all family members based on the Islamic sharia, as noted in paragraph 24 of the State party's replies to the list of issues. Women were now entitled to apply for a termination of marriage by means of *khul'* or annulment of the contract under certain conditions. Guardianship was normally a shared responsibility but custody depended, in the event of a divorce, on the best interests of the child and a ruling based on family court proceedings. All issues, including inheritance, were based on the provisions of the Islamic sharia.

47. Act No. 27 of 2018 amending certain rules governing the Court of Cassation had been promulgated on 1 July 2018. It allowed the Court to hear appeals against sharia court judgments.

48. The adoption of Act No. 17 of 2015 on Protection from Domestic Violence had led to the launch of a strategy on combating violence against women. Handling cases of violence against women was the focus of a special judicial unit headed by a female judge, who was authorized to rule on those cases and issue orders for the protection and assistance of victims. Perpetrators of domestic violence were prosecuted.

49. All women in Bahrain had property rights. They could dispose of their assets as they saw fit. No man could take his wife's property without her consent, and the courts could not seize a woman's property if her husband happened to be arrested. In the event of divorce, women were entitled to keep the property that they had brought to the marriage. They could also remain in their house.

50. A bill had been drafted to repeal article 353 of the Criminal Code, under which some perpetrators of domestic violence had been able to escape punishment. The bill was currently before the country's lawmakers.

51. **Mr. Aldoseri** (Bahrain) said that he questioned the credibility of allegations that the country's courts allowed impunity to flourish unchecked. In any event, more information on that and other issues would be provided in writing.

52. **Mr. Aldosari** (Bahrain) said that, under the Constitution of Bahrain, there was a system of separation of powers, which had been reinforced by later legislative developments. The Public Prosecution Office had no master but the law, and the judiciary was fully independent. Judges, who were not permitted to run for elective office, could not be removed arbitrarily. The law ensured that the sentences that they handed down were just.

53. Trials were public unless the judge decided that they should be held in camera to protect victims and witnesses, children in particular. Accused persons had access to a lawyer, who was provided by the State for those who could not afford one. Sentences, which could be appealed, could not be based on information obtained by subjecting defendants to unlawful acts. The Public Prosecutor or the courts could issue orders banning suspects from leaving the country. The aim of those bans, which were resorted to only when necessary, was to ensure that justice was done — by making it less likely that a suspect would abscond, for instance. The bans could be appealed. Allegations of impunity were groundless. The judicial system ensured that crime did not go unpunished, and the commission of torture had been made a crime under the Criminal Code. Measures taken by the Special Investigation Unit of the Public Prosecution Office had led to the commutation of the sentences of more than a hundred prisoners.

54. **Mr. Al Ma'awdah** (Bahrain) said that the country's Office of the Ombudsman had been the first such office in the Persian Gulf region. In 2014, the Office had been awarded the Chaillot Prize for the Promotion of Human Rights in the Gulf Cooperation Council Region. Since July 2013, the Office had received more than 4,000 complaints, many of which had been submitted by detainees. It was thus clear that the Office was a trusted institution.

55. The Special Investigation Unit was responsible for investigating allegations of torture and ill-treatment made against government officials. The Unit's investigations were informed by the Istanbul Protocol. The Unit also had a forensic medicine department. As a result of the Unit's work, 120 police officers, some of whom had eventually been sentenced to quite long prison terms, had been referred to the criminal courts.

56. The Prisoners and Detainees Rights Commission had been established by Act No. 61 of 2013. The Commission monitored conditions in prisons and other detention facilities, including juvenile detention centres. The Commission, whose members were nominated by civil society, the Public Prosecution Office and other stakeholders, worked with complete independence. It had carried out 13 unannounced visits since its establishment, and its visit reports were available on its website.

57. **Mr. de Frouville** said that the delegation should make an effort to reply to the questions asked by Committee members, rather than repeat information that could be found in the State party's initial report. In addition, he wondered whether he had understood correctly that people who raised the issue of the religious make-up of the State party's population could be prosecuted.

58. **Mr. Aldoseri** (Bahrain) said that no one could ever be prosecuted for discussing the religious make-up of the country's population.

59. **Mr. de Frouville** said that he would welcome a specific reply to his earlier question about the State party's reservations to the Covenant. In particular, he wished to know what provisions of law justified those reservations. He also wished to know whether the State party's courts had invoked the Covenant in cases other than the one that had been mentioned.

60. **Ms. Cleveland**, referring to the State party's replies to the list of issues (para. 39), asked what specific jobs were deemed "incompatible with the physiology of women" and whether any exceptions were made to the law prohibiting women from working at night.

61. **Mr. Muhumuza** said that, in view of the troubling information provided by the authorities themselves, he would welcome up-to-date statistics, broken down by facility, on the capacity and occupation levels of the State party's prisons and other detention facilities. It would be interesting to know what measures were being taken to reduce overcrowding and improve prison conditions. The delegation should address reports that detainees were subjected to violence and denied medical care. In that connection, an explanation of the steps that had been taken to ensure that detainees had access to medical care would be especially welcome. The delegation should also explain how the effectiveness of any measures that were taken to improve prison conditions was assessed and describe what efforts, including those made possible by Act No. 18 of 2017 on Penalties and Alternative Measures, were being made to promote alternatives to detention.

62. **Mr. Heyns** said that he would welcome an additional indication of the extent to which the recommendations made by the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry had been acted on. As he had noted earlier, he wished to know how many people had been sentenced to death in the State party and were in its prisons awaiting execution. Lastly, he wondered whether the right to life was enshrined in the country's Constitution and, if not, why not.

63. **Mr. Aldoseri** (Bahrain) said that the Covenant had been invoked in only one case, which had been heard by the Constitutional Court. The additional clarifications that had been requested would be provided either in writing or at the meeting the following morning.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.